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MARY JANE & BLACK CAT

MARY JANE WATSON and **FELICIA HARDY,** A.K.A. the **BLACK CAT,** are in a bit of a jam. Ever since **BEN REILLY,** A.K.A. **CHASM,** and **MADELYNE PRYOR,** A.K.A. the **GOBLIN QUEEN,** opened the doors to Limbo, demonic spirits have been possessing everyday objects, wreaking havoc on New York City! Felicia made her way across the city to help MJ and her family, as a favor to MJ's ex and Felicia's current (secret) boyfriend, **PETER PARKER,** A.K.A. **SPIDER-MAN.** But when Felicia arrived, she was surprised to find that MJ had powers -- and was fully capable of defending herself!

They were soon sucked through a portal into Limbo -- where they struck a deal with **BELASCO,** Limbo's former ruler. The two Earth girls would be granted passage back to Earth in exchange for braving the **SCREAMING TOWER** to retrieve the key to controlling the demonic dimension -- Belasco's lost **SOULSWORD!** Unfortunately for Felicia and MJ, various highly dangerous parties across the Multiverse are trying to get their hands/claws/tentacles on the sword. But they may have found their best chance at survival with a helping hand from...***S'YM?!***

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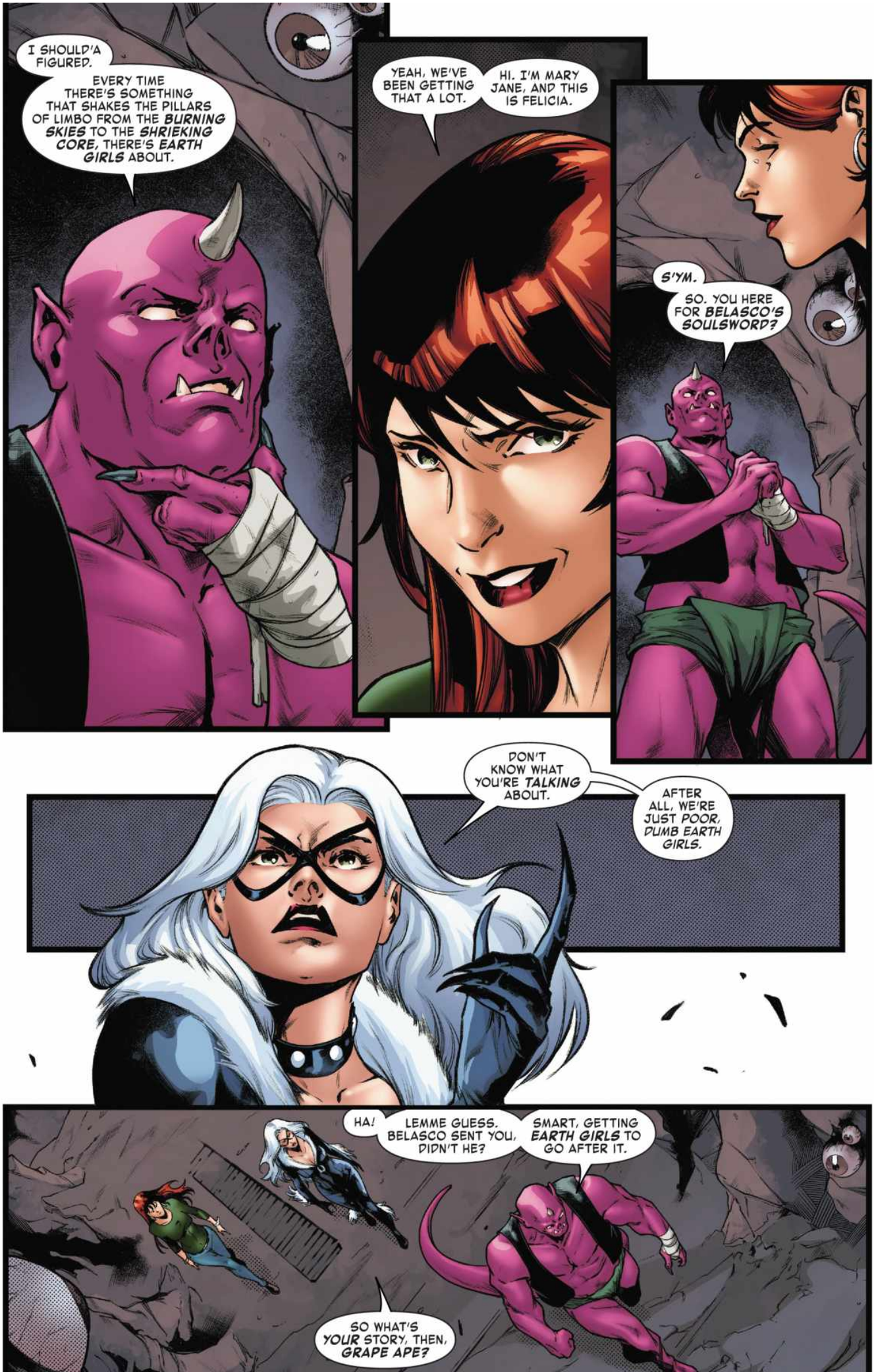
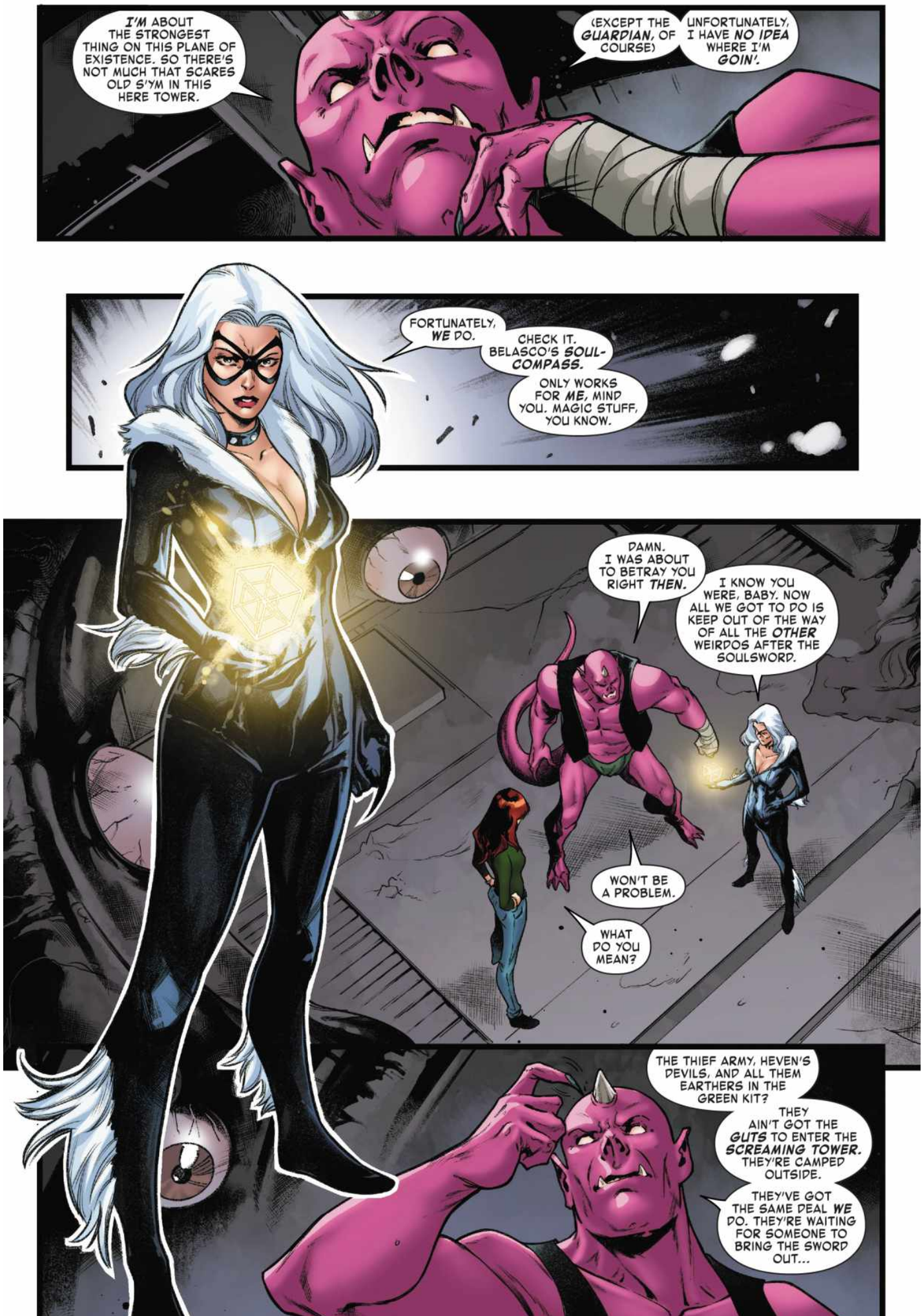
SO, THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WE DIDN'T FALL INTO A BOTTOMLESS PIT.
THE BAD NEWS?
NOW WE OWE *THIS* GUY ONE.
EARTH GIRLS. HUH.
INTERESTIN'ER AND INTERESTIN'ER.
HEYYYYY, MAAAAN...


I SHOULD'A FIGURED.
EVERY TIME THERE'S SOMETHING THAT SHAKES THE PILLARS OF LIMBO FROM THE BURNING SKIES TO THE SHRIEKING CORE, THERE'S EARTH GIRLS ABOUT.
YEAH, WE'VE BEEN GETTING THAT A LOT.
HI. I'M MARY JANE, AND THIS IS FELICIA.
S'YM.
SO. YOU HERE FOR BELASCO'S SOULSWORD?
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
AFTER ALL, WE'RE JUST POOR, DUMB EARTH GIRLS.
HA!
LEMME GUESS. BELASCO SENT YOU, DIDN'T HE?
SMART, GETTING EARTH GIRLS TO GO AFTER IT.
SO WHAT'S YOUR STORY, THEN, GRAPE APE?

AW, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.
ALWAYS THE MINION, NEVER THE OVERLORD.
FIRST, BELASCO--WHO'S ORIGINALLY AN EARTH BOY, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT--RUNS LIMBO, THEN ILLYANA, NOW PRYOR--
(WHO CUT OFF ONE OF MY FINGERS--WHO DOES THAT?)
WAY I SEE IT, WHY SHOULDN'T I GO AFTER BELASCO'S SOULSWORD?
WHY DO EARTHERS ALWAYS GOT TO RULE LIMBO? WHY NOT ONE OF OUR OWN?
COLONIALISM IS WHAT IT IS.
I MEAN... I GUESS SO?
SO YOU'RE A DEMON! SO WHAT?!
WHY SHOULD THAT BAR YOU FROM PUBLIC OFFICE?
SEE? YOU GET IT.
ALL RIGHT, GRIMACE. YOU GOT US. WE'RE WORKING FOR BELASCO.
WE HAVE TO BRING HIM THE SOULSWORD IF WE WANT TO GET HOME. WHICH MEANS THAT YOU AND US ARE AFTER THE SAME THING.
SO HOW ABOUT THIS: WE TEAM UP, BEAT THE TOWER TOGETHER, AND THEN WE CAN INEVITABLY BETRAY EACH OTHER WHEN WE FIND THE SWORD?
HAW!
NOW YOU'RE TALKING.


I'M ABOUT THE STRONGEST THING ON THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE. SO THERE'S NOT MUCH THAT SCARES OLD S'YM IN THIS HERE TOWER.
(EXCEPT THE GUARDIAN, OF COURSE)
UNFORTUNATELY, I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I'M GOIN'.
FORTUNATELY, WE DO.
CHECK IT. BELASCO'S SOUL-COMPASS.
ONLY WORKS FOR ME, MIND YOU. MAGIC STUFF, YOU KNOW.
DAMN. I WAS ABOUT TO BETRAY YOU RIGHT THEN.
I KNOW YOU WERE, BABY. NOW ALL WE GOT TO DO IS KEEP OUT OF THE WAY OF ALL THE OTHER WEIRDOS AFTER THE SOULSWORD.
WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THE THIEF ARMY, HEVEN'S DEVILS, AND ALL THEM EARTHERS IN THE GREEN KIT?
THEY AIN'T GOT THE GUTS TO ENTER THE SCREAMING TOWER. THEY'RE CAMPED OUTSIDE.
THEY'VE GOT THE SAME DEAL WE DO. THEY'RE WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO BRING THE SWORD OUT...

"...AND THEN THEY'LL *TAKE* IT OFF 'EM.
"AND *THEN* THE TRUCE IS *OVER.*"

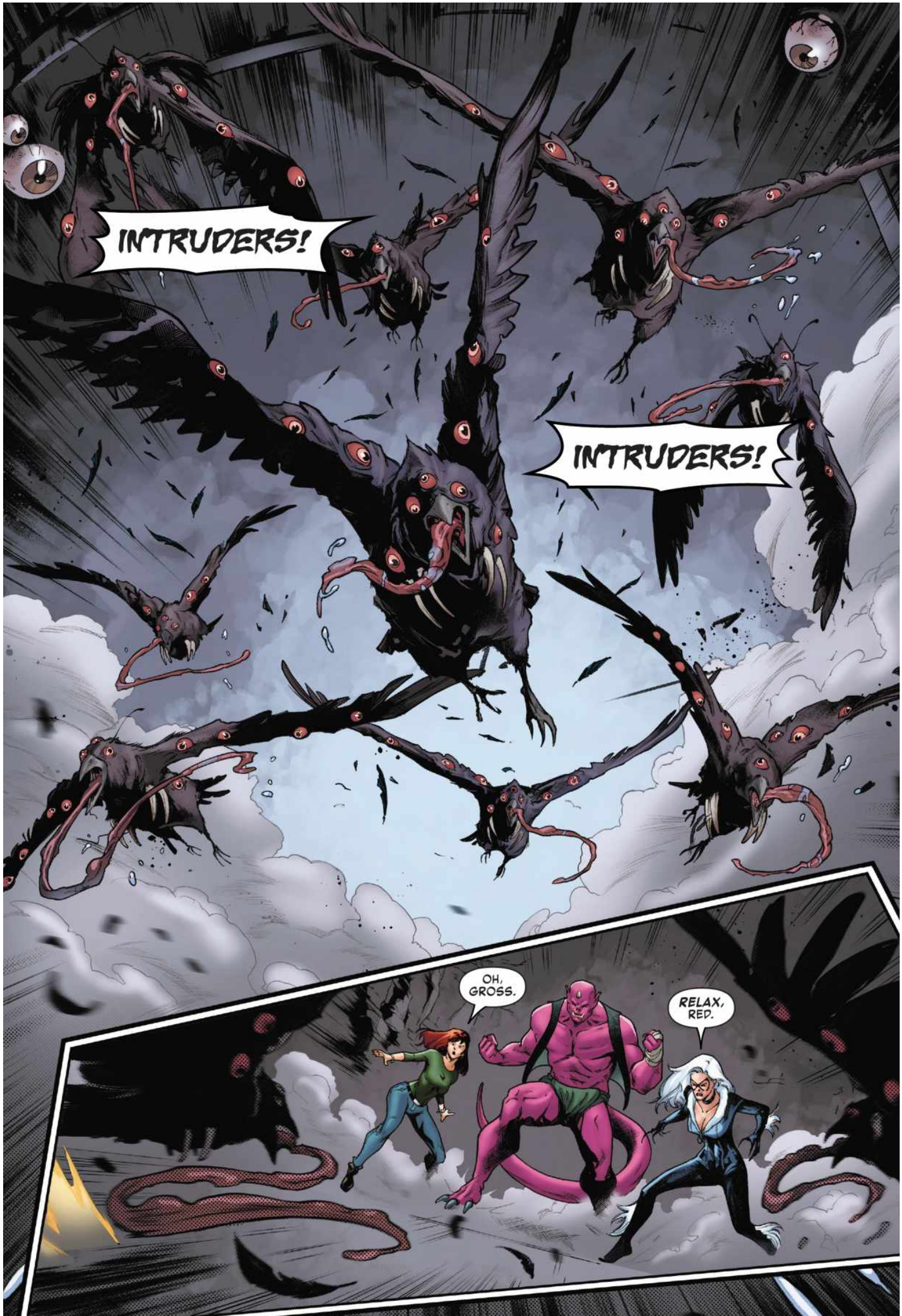
SUPER COOL.
SO ONCE WE GET THE SOULSWORD, THEN WE HAVE TO FIGHT OUR WAY PAST THEM?
YEP!
DON'T WORRY THOUGH, YOU PROBABLY WON'T END UP HAVING TO FIGHT THEM.
OH YEAH? WHY'S THAT?
BECAUSE I'LL BETRAY YOU AND TAKE THE SOULSWORD FIRST, YOU GOOSE!
AND THAT'S IF THE GUARDIAN DOESN'T KILL US ALL FIRST!
HEY, YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR THIS, RIGHT?
DO I LOOK LIKE I HAVE A PLAN RIGHT NOW?

NOW, I USUALLY DON'T LIKE ADMITTING WHEN I DON'T HAVE A PLAN.
IT TENDS TO FREAK PEOPLE OUT.
BUT CALL IT A COMPROMISE.
I NEED TO TELL MJ THE TRUTH ABOUT SOMETHING.
THIS IS ME PICKING AND CHOOSING.

THIS THING, THIS THING WITH SPIDER AND ME...
...IT'S THE WORST KIND OF SECRET:
THE KIND THAT WILL COME OUT.
BECAUSE IT'S GOT TO, RIGHT?
WE CAN'T RUN AROUND IN SECRET FOREVER.
NO.
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THIS BOMB IS GOING TO GO OFF.
BUT BETTER IT BLOWS UP BACK HOME WHERE IT'S SAFE(ISH) THAN HERE, WHERE IT COULD GET US KILLED.
I'M JUST TRYING TO MITIGATE THE DAMAGE

OR THAT'S WHAT I'M *TELLING* MYSELF, ANYWAYS.
YOU'RE AWFUL QUIET.
YOU OKAY?
NOT REALLY, RED.
THIS IS PRETTY FAR FROM AN IDEAL SITUATION.
I'M HAVING A GOOD TIME.
YOU EARTH GIRLS ARE A *DELIGHT.* NO ONE'S ORDERED ME AROUND OR CUT ANYTHING OFF OF ME OR *ANYTHING.*
DON'T GET ME WRONG.
I LIVE FOR EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCES, AND THIS IS DEFINITELY ONE FOR THE SCRAPBOOK.
YOU SCRAPBOOK *TOO?*
I FIND IT VERY THERAPEUTIC. BUT TO MY *POINT.*
WE ARE IN *HOT WATER,* RED.
WE'RE IN A *HELL DIMENSION,* IN A *TOWER* THAT EVEN THE *DENIZENS* OF THIS HELL DIMENSION ARE *AFRAID* OF, WORKING FOR AN ITALIAN DEMON, ALLIED WITH *ANOTHER* DEMON WHO IS TOTALLY UPFRONT ABOUT *BETRAYING US--*
--NO *OFFENSE,* S'YM, THE HONESTY IS ACTUALLY QUITE REFRESHING--
DON'T MENTION IT.

SURE.
LOOK, I'M NOT AN IDIOT. I KNOW THIS IS *PRETTY BAD.*
BUT REMEMBER OUR *LAST* TEAM-UP? YOU AND I TOOK ON TOMBSTONE, SHOCKER... DAMN, LIKE, HALF THE SINISTER SIX?
I DON'T THINK THAT MATH WORKS OUT.
HONESTLY, I HAVE NO IDEA WHO'S BEEN IN THE SINISTER SIX AND WHO HASN'T AT THIS POINT.
POINT IS, WE *GOT* THIS! I'VE GOT *FELICIA HARDY* ON MY TEAM, CAN'T LOSE!
OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE.
SHE'S NOT MAKING THIS EASY.
WELL, THANKS FOR THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, RED.
BECAUSE IT'S LOOKING LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE PUT TO THE *TEST.*


INTRUDERS!
INTRUDERS!
OH, GROSS.
RELAX, RED.

YOU KNOW HOW IT USUALLY GOES BETWEEN BIRDS AND CATS.
S'YM!
ARE *THESE* THE GUARDIAN YOU'VE BEEN GOING ON ABOUT?
THESE?
HA! NOPE.
SHOULD I POWER UP?
NAH.
HERE, CATCH.

GOT IT!
IF WE'RE GOING TO TAKE CARE OF THE DIRTY LAUNDRY...
...THEN WE'LL NEED A CLOTHESLINE!
HAW!
DON'T ENCOURAGE HER, S'YM. THAT WAS TERRIBLE.
YEAH, IT'S NEVER BEEN MY STRONG SUIT.
I'LL WORKSHOP IT FOR NEXT TIME.
WHAT'S UP? YOU LOOK AWFUL PLEASED TO HAVE BEATEN UP A BUNCH OF GROSS BIRDS.
I AM. BECAUSE IT'S THE SAME IN A NIGHTMARE HELL-TOWER AS IT IS IN A PRIVATE VAULT ON EARTH.
GUARDS MEAN WE'RE CLOSE.

WHICH MEANS WE'VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO WHEN WE GET THERE.
BESIDES BETRAY/GET BETRAYED BY S'YM, OF COURSE.
OF COURSE.
S'YM, I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU TOLD US ABOUT THIS GUARDIAN.
A NASTY PIECE OF WORK.
OR SO I'M TOLD.
THING IS, THIS TOWER?
THE DARK GODS DIDN'T BUILD IT TO KEEP THE SOULSWORD SAFE.
THAT'S WHAT THE GUARDIAN IS FOR.
THE SCREAMING TOWER WAS MEANT TO IMPRISON THE GUARDIAN.
AND, WELL...

...IT SHOULD TURN UP *ANY TIME* NOW.

...WHAT?
...OH.
SCATTER!
SORRY, RED, LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME TO SPIN FOR A POWER!
OKAY, BIG MONEY, BIG MONEY...

WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING, EARTH GIRLS, YOU'D BETTER HURRY--
RAAAAGHH!
DID YOU GET SOMETHING GOOD THIS TIME?
I--
--I THINK I CAN MAKE COLORED SMOKE?
DAMMIT!
--JUST SAYING, THIS WOULD BE A REAL LOUSY TIME TO BETRAY ME--
BETRAYAL--
--THIS BAD LUCK...
WAIT.

FELICIA, YOU'RE GIVING ME BAD LUCK!
WITH YOUR POWERS!
WHAT?
NO, THAT'S NOT RIGHT--
I ONLY CAUSE BAD LUCK FOR MY ENEMIES--
OH NO.
THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
UNLESS--
OH NO.
WHAMMM
RAAAGHH!
"--UNLESS SOME PART OF YOU UNCONSCIOUSLY SEES ME AS AN ENEMY."

MORE PRESSING CONCERNS HERE, RED!
EXCEPT THERE ISN'T, IS THERE?

BECAUSE WE'RE BOTH PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER AT THE SAME TIME.
IT CAN'T BE SOMETHING I DID TO YOU, BECAUSE YOU'D NEVER LET ME FORGET IT.

AND JUST LIKE THAT...
URKKK!

...THE BOMB GOES OFF.
WHICH MEANS IT'S SOMETHING

OH GOD--
THIS IS ABOUT PETER, ISN'T IT?!
KABOOM.

NEXT:

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ZONE